

Open Research Pilot case studies: promoting greater openness in research

In the second blog in our series marking the end of the [Open Research Pilot](#) (a two-year initiative involving [University of Cambridge research groups](#), University Research Support, and [Wellcome Trust's Open Research Team](#)), Dr Laurent Gatto tells us about his group's involvement with the project. His particular Open interests during this time have been how to influence the research community in general towards greater openness.

START OF PROJECT

Dr Gatto initially applied to be part of the project so he could learn about other researchers' views on open research, and to contribute to and promote open research. In particular, he thought that participating in a project initiated by the Office of Scholarly Communication (OSC) at the University of Cambridge and the Wellcome Trust seemed a good opportunity to influence the UK research environment towards greater openness. His greatest hope was to promote – directly or indirectly – greater openness in research as widely as possible, thanks to the reputation of the project organisers.

PROJECT IN PROGRESS

While some participating groups may have progressed towards greater openness individually, it was Dr Gatto's hope to achieve a wider impact, beyond those around the table. However, for him, the project has been arguably too contained for that and so he is unclear about what has been achieved overall.

All participants had interesting inputs and some were already well versed in open research. He thought that the project could therefore have been much more ambitious through making use of the collective wisdom and experience by being open and collaborative, such as through asking for input from the community at large, opening up the discussion channels, and when specific questions arose, asking experienced members from the open community for advice.

LOOKING AHEAD

Dr Gatto suggests that there are two types of support that researchers need:

Firstly, technical support, helping researchers to discover and use open research platforms. In a minority of cases, new platforms might need to be developed (for really massive data for example, or for distributed computing requirements), but for the vast majority of researchers, reasonable technical solutions and support are readily available on-line. Local, in-person support is helpful for providing a point of contact for face-to-face training, and for redirecting researchers to the right resources.

The second type of support needed should come from the institutions – senior academics, funders, etc. – to support researchers in being open and making them successful by being open. For example, funders are in a position to redefine priorities in research by promoting and funding researchers that demonstrate open and reproducible research. This type of support is something that has been generally missing in Dr Gatto's experience; he believes the current priorities of senior management do not support the provision of adequate rewards for open researchers. This is the kind of support he would have needed as a researcher in Cambridge.

Dr Gatto welcomes the publication of peer review reports (signed or anonymous) and the promotion of pre-prints (including open, public review and discussion of pre-prints) as important current advances. He likes the Wellcome Trust's recent call of Open Research Projects and the publication of all proposals. He thinks that such efforts promote open research throughout the community, across senior and early career researchers and students, demonstrating that openness is not only an afterthought any more, but becoming the default practice. He believes these measures will drive researchers to explore how to implement their research openly and explore technical solutions. Finally, he believes that educating under- and post-graduates about open research, either explicitly, or as part of other courses, should also lead to greater openness.

As told to the Open Research Pilot Research Support Team

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